REPLY

OF

CERTAIN RETIRED OFFICERS

OF THE

7th Battalion, London Volunteers,

TO THE

MISREPRESENTATIONS MADE AGAINST THEM

IN THE

House of Commons,

ON THE 4TH APRIL, 1870,

BY THE

MINISTER OF MILITIA

AND

MR. ALEXANDER MACKENZIE, M.P.,

ON THE OCCASION OF MR. BODWELL, M.P., MOVING FOR PAPERS RELATING TO THEIR RESIGNATIONS.

ALSO,

A COPY OF THE CHARGES

WHICH WERE PREFERRED BY LIEUT. CHARLES BENNETT, ONE OF THEIR NUMBER, AGAINST LT.-COL. ROBERT LEWIS,

But which were burked at the instance of the Adjutant-General of Militia.

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REPLY

TO THE STATEMENTS MADE BY

THE HONORABLE THE MINISTER OF MILITIA

AND

MR. ALEXANDER MACKENZIE, M.P.,

IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS ON THE 4th *INST., ON*

MR. BODWELL'S MOTION

FOR THE PRODUCTION OF CORRESPONDENCE TOUCHING THE RESIGNATION OF CERTAIN OFFICERS OF THE SEVENTH BATTALION OF VOLUNTEERS.

We observe in the published debates of the House of Commons on Mr. Bodwell's motion for the production of papers relating to certain resignations in the Seventh Battalion of Volunteer Militia, so many misstatements made by the Minister of Militia and by Mr. Alex. Mackenzie respecting, and such a complete distortion of the facts of, the case under discussion, that in justice to ourselves we are compelled to submit to the impartial criticism and judgment of the public a statement of the facts, which, for some unaccountable reason, the Minister of Militia and the Government desire to withhold.

Before entering, however, upon the facts which gave rise to the resignations we desire to notice a statement, which is credited by the press to Mr. Mackenzie, "that the officers who had tendered their resignations had conspired to get rid of their colonel *because he was a painter.*" No more unfounded accusation could have been made. All the officers in question have to labor for their living. One of them (Mr. Teale) is a marble cutter, another of them (Mr. Bennett) a cabinet-maker, and, let us add for the benefit of Mr. Mackenzie, a *Scotchman and a Clear Grit* of an advanced type to boot, and these two were the only mechanics, with one exception, of all the officers of the Battalion. The statement only affords another apt illustration of the saying that "one must go from home to hear the news." At home the only motives imputed by the partizans of Lt-Col. Lewis to the officers resigning were political ones and a desire for promotion, and the motive now suggested is only imputed because it will answer the purpose better than the others.

The objections to Lt. Col. Lewis were of a grave nature; and were based upon the reasons, set forth in the charges, (a copy of which is annexed here), subsequently brought against Lt. Col. Lewis by Mr. C. Bennett, at that time an officer in the Battalion, and other matters concerning the economy of the Battalion:

Col. Taylor, the district staff officer, was well aware of the dissatisfaction existing in the Battalion, and admitted it to be well founded, and when waited upon, not only by the officers who resigned, but by another at present occupying *the position of a field officer in the Battalion*, with a view to consulting him as to the best means to be devised to get rid of Lt.-Col. Lewis, suggested, or at least fell in with the suggestion, that the best course to

bring matters to a crisis would be for the officers who were dissatisfied to tender their resignations, and that so many of them being sent in at once would naturally lead to inquiry and investigation and ultimately to the removal of the cause of dissatisfaction.

Nine of the officers tendered their resignations, the last sent in being forwarded on the 1st of September last to Lt.-Col. Lewis. All of them were unconditional, and a determination existed not to withdraw them unless an enquiry was directed into our grievances.

No communication was received from any quarter, in regard to them, until the visit of the Adjutant-General to London on his annual tour of inspection (on the sixteenth of September last) and up to that time no formal complaint had been sent in to the Adjutant-General, although Col. Taylor had been informed and was well aware of the serious character of the complaints made against Lt.-Col. Lewis.

On the morning of the day of the inspection, the officers who had tendered their resignations were officially notified that the Adjutant General desired to see them at Col. Taylor's office at an hour which was named. At the hour named we repaired to Col. Taylor's office, where we met the Adjutant General, Col. Taylor, Lt. Col Lewis, and two or three of the other officers of the Battalion. The Adjutant General then addressed us. He commenced by referring to the unfortunate difficulties (as he termed them) which had arisen in the Battalion; to its former high standing; to his then visit being his first in an official capacity; to his desire for the good of the service; and appealed to us for these considerations—*as a personal favor to himself*, coming, as he said he did, a stranger amongst us, and as a brother officer, *to permit our resignations to be withdrawn and to return to our duty.* He said he was quite sure Lt. Col. Lewis, if he had said or done anything to hurt our feelings, would apologize to us, which *Lt. Col. Lewis thereupon offered to do.*

We politely but firmly *declined to consent* to what the Adjutant General asked. We thanked him for the kindly expressions he had made use of towards us and expressed our extreme regret that we could not in justice to ourselves, and to the uniform we wore, consent to serve longer under Lt. Col. Lewis. We informed him that our complaints against the Lt. Col. were not of a personal nature, but rested upon higher grounds, and that no apology would be an apt or sufficient remedy. We, at the same time, intimated to the Adjutant General our readiness to make our charges against Lt. Col. Lewis specifically, but he distinctly refused *to examine into or even hear* any complaints. After we had replied verbally to the Adjutant General, he desired us to retire and consider what had passed, and not to give a final answer until a later hour.

We then retired, and, having consulted among ourselves, prepared a letter to the Adjutant General, containing our formal answer, in which we reiterated the verbal statement made to him, and also added, that if our complaints against Lt. Col. Lewis were simply of a private nature, we would be quite willing, out of respect for him (the Adjutant General), to forget them and return to our duty.

We, at the same interview, asked for and obtained permission from the Adjutant General, as an act of courtesy to him, to appear in uniform at the inspection, which was to be held in the afternoon, *without being called upon to do duty under Lt. Col. Lewis.*

Before the inspection commenced the Adjutant General intimated to us,

through Captain Starr, that he desired to see us after the inspection, and we afterwards met him at the drill shed, by appointment.

He informed us that he had received our written communication, and *thanked us for its kindly and courteous tone*, and in the course of a long and apparently friendly and familiar conversation, told us of the difficulties of getting rid of bad commanding officers—*instanced cases* where commanding officers had been guilty of *cheating at cards* and other dishonorable acts, and no redress could be had; spoke of the unpleasantness of serving under "*beasts of commanding officers*," told us that he feared our complaints were not of that military character that would justify him in calling upon Lt.-Col. Lewis to resign. But finally said, *he thought he saw his way out of the difficulty*, and requested us *to allow our resignations to remain in abeyance* until he returned to Ottawa, when he would consider the case and let Col. Taylor, who was present at the interview, know the result; *at the same time leading us to believe that he expected to be able to get rid of Lt.-Col. Lewis.* Col. Taylor then suggested that we must in the meantime return to our duty as the annual drill was then proceeding, and guards of honor, and other guards would be required at the approaching visit of His Royal Highness Prince Arthur. We declined appearing under Lt.-Col. Lewis, but promised to turn out a guard and have the drills properly attended to in the meantime by the men of our companies. The Adjutant-General refused to assent to this—but on its being suggested that as the guard of honor *was a company guard*, and the officers of it would not, therefore, be under the command of Lt-Col. Lewis, the difficulty might be provided for *by cancelling the parades* then going on. He assented to this and left us, repeating the compact between us in substantially these words. "*You agree then to let your resignations stand in abeyance until I return to Ottawa, and in* the meantime to return to your duty, it *being understood that there will be no duty to perform, as the parades will be cancelled, and, in the meantime, I will see what can be done for you so that your services can be retained.*" And he in our presence directed Col. Taylor to issue an order cancelling the parades. He then left us in a most friendly manner.

The parades were not cancelled as agreed upon. The Prince's visit took place and we were in a difficulty. Lt. Col. Lewis ordered that the guard of honor should comprise the whole Battalion, which he would command, instead of being a company as it should have been. We could not serve under Lt. Col. Lewis, and were most anxious not to do anything which might be construed into a breach of faith with the Adjutant General. We accordingly called upon Lt. Col. Lewis and arranged that a guard should be formed under the command of a captain, that the officer to command it should be named by him, although the officers he insisted upon naming were not the senior officers or entitled of right to command the guard. The guard was obtained almost *entirely by the exertions and at the expense of the officers* whom the Adjutant General is pleased to term the "disaffected," and His Royal Highness was creditably received, which he would not have been, but for their exertions.

The Prince's visit over, nothing was heard from the Adjutant General until about the 8th of October last, when some (not all) of the officers who had tendered their resignations, were invited by Col. Taylor to visit his office, and peruse a communication he had received from the Adjutant General in reference to our resignations, in which the Adjutant General was *graciously pleased* to say that if the "disaffected" officers would apologize to Lt. Col. Lewis, and he *would accept their apology*, they *might* return to their duty,

and if not that their resignations should immediately be forwarded for acceptance.

A more cool and deliberate insult could hardly have been offered by one man to another, and a more barefaced attempt to mis-state and reverse the true position of the parties could not have been imagined. The "disaffected officers" had neither asked, nor desired to withdraw their resignations. They had been *persuaded, pressed* and coaxed to *withdraw them*, but had *refused to do so*, and had only at length consented to let them remain in *abeyance at the urgent solicitations of the Adjutant-General* upon an express promise, that was made only to be broken, and an implied one that the Adjutant General could never have intended to keep. And then to write such a letter! He must have been crazy when he wrote it, or imagined that the men he was dealing with were fools.

We need not add that this gracious offer was indignantly refused by all the "disaffected," with that contempt which it deserved.

It might reasonably be expected that the head of the militia department, when he presumed to speak authoritatively in the House, *would have at least* taken the trouble *to have learned* the facts of the case he was discussing before endeavoring to enlighten the House as to them. But not only was this not so, but almost every statement made by him in the course of his speech was incorrect, and if he had only taken the trouble to look at the papers in his department, *upon the examination of which he had professed to pass judgment*, he would have learned their incorrectness.

He would have it inferred that the resignations were sent in after the difficulty of Capt. Meredith in reference to the guard at the Prince's residence, *while, in fact, they were sent in nearly a month before.*

He also states that Captain Meredith attempted to take posssession of the guard by force. A statement wholly unfounded. (See Mr. Meredith's statement appended.)

He says too that Lt.-Col. Lewis is an "excellent and praiseworthy officer.' As k any Militia officer in the district if this is correct? Save only Brigade Major Moffat, and Captain Melville Du Blois Dawson, the brother-in-law of the "excellent and praiseworthy officer."

To sum up, we complain :—

1. That the Adjutant General of Militia was guilty of a gross breach of faith in reference to his promise to cancel the parades.

2. That he was guilty of a dishonorable and mean attempt to make it appear that we had requested to be allowed to withdraw our resignations, while, on the contrary, we had consented to their remaining in abeyance only at his own urgent solicitation and request, after we had positively declined to withdraw them.

3. That the Minister of Militia has concurred in the action of the Adjutant-General in saying that we ought to have accepted an apology for matters such as those charged by Lieut. Bennett, in the memorandum of his charges annexed hereto, which for the purposes of his arguments with us on the 16th September last (as is shown) he admitted to be true.

4. That he refused an enquiry and investigation into the grave charges preferred against Lt.-Col. Lewis.

5. That he has in his place in Parliament, either wilfully or recklessly

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misstated facts which ought to have been known to him, as a mere cursory examination of the papers upon which he professed to have passed judgment must have shown him that most of his statements were, to say the least, erroneous.

D. C. MACDONALD,	late	Captain,
W. R. MEREDITH,	"	"
JAMES A. CRAIG,	"	"
HARRY BRUCE,	"	"
E. T. TEALE,	"	"
THOS. N. GREENE,	"	Lieut. & Adjt.
R. M. MEREDITH,	"	"
C. BENNETT,	"	"
C. S. CORRIGAN,	"	Ensign.

London, April 6th, 1870.

STATEMENT OF MR. MEREDITH

WITH REFERENCE TO THE GUARD ON THE PRINCE'S RESIDENCE.

' I was on the evening of the Prince's arrival regularly warned by the Adjutant of the regiment to take command of the guard which was to relieve, on the following morning, the guard of that day (afterwards called the old guard.) I neither sought, nor desired to occupy the position which was assigned to me, but acted in what I subsequently did simply in the performance of a military duty, rather irksome than otherwise, but a necessary one. On the following morning I went to the drill shed to take charge of the guard and march it to the Prince's residence. The guard assembled at the usual hour, was inspected by the Adjutant, handed over to me and marched by me to the residence of the Prince, and there drawn up for the purpose of relieving the old guard, but its captain *refused to be relieved by me.* I then, for the first time that day, met Captain Walker, who informed me that he had been ordered by the commanding officer of the regiment for the duty I was performing. I informed Captain Walker that I had been warned for the duty on the previous evening *in the regular way;* that the guard had been inspected and handed over to me, and that it was my duty not to surrender it to any one. Finding that the captain of the old guard would not permit me to relieve him, I sent for the Adjutant to produce the orders under which I was acting, but before his arrival the commanding officer of the Battalion appeared upon the scene *in plain clothes,* and *in a coarse and ungentlemanly,* though not the less characteristic manner, publicly insulted me and the subaltern officer under me in charge of the new guard ; refused to hear or to listen to my explanations or statement, and in an insulting and contemptous manner ordered the men forming the new guard *not to obey me,* and in the presence and hearing of the men ordered Captain Walker to make prisoners " of those men," referring to myself and the subaltern officer above alluded to. Had I acted strictly up to my sense of duty I ought to have made him or any one else interfering with my guard prisoners, but being desirous of avoiding an unseemly disturbance in front of the Prince's quarters and in his hearing, I did not do so, but retired from the command of the guard.

I then *reported* to Col. Taylor, the district staff officer, what had occurred, and returned home, took off my uniform, and attired in plain clothes went in quest of Lt. Col. Lewis *with the view of demanding an apology from him* for the gross insult he had offered to me, and in the event of not receiving it determined to chastise him for his insolence. Shortly afterwards I met him in the *Free Press* office, challenged him with the insult, and receiving no apology or satisfaction, but merely a false denial of having insulted me, slapped him in the face.

I had no intention at any time of doing more than slapping Lt. Col. Lewis' face in the event of not receiving an apology, but even if I had his hasty retreat when the encounter took place would have prevented my inflicting any more serious punishment.

I do not deny that, as has been alleged, I was somewhat, and naturally too, I think much excited when I met Lt. Col. Lewis; but upon reflection I do not see how I could have acted otherwise. If I had I would have merited the accusation of being a "coward;" as it is some may call me a "rowdy," but being allowed a choice between the two I unhesitatingly admit that I am willing to bear the odium of the latter rather than the former accusation.

W. R. MEREDITH,

COPY OF CHARGES

PREFERRED BY

LIEUT. BENNETT AGAINST LIEUT.-COL. LEWIS 7th BATT., V.M.

LONDON, 30th Sept., 1869.

SIR,—

I have the honor to submit the following charges against Lieutenant Col. Robert Lewis, commanding the 7th Battalion, Volunteer Militia of Canada.

First.—That he has shown general unfitness for his position, and ignorance of his duties—as an instance: on the 24th of May last, it was necessary for the officer in charge of the Brigade to give the *Executive* word of command to the Battalion in order to prevent a dead-lock in the parade.

Second.—That in the month of November, 1867, in a rifle match between ten men of the 7th Battalion, and the same number of men of the 22nd Battalion, Lt.-Col. Lewis acting as scorer, *wilfully and corruptly* so altered the figures in favor of the 7th Battalion, that it appeared the winner by 8 points, when in truth and in fact the 22nd had fairly won the match, thereby defrauding the men of the 22nd out of the match and the money they had wagered.

Third.—That Lt.-Col. Lewis acted as Treasurer for the Western District Rifle Match in 1867, when a large amount of money was collected for prizes, and, besides which, the entrance fees amounted to nearly as large a sum as

the prizes paid; yet no statement has ever been obtained of the amounts received and disbursed, although Lt.-Col. Lewis has been frequently asked for the same; and he well knows that his withholding the same has given rise to questions regarding his honesty in the matter.

Fourth.—That at the Ontario Rifle Match at Toronto, in July last, he permitted persons to pass themselves off as Volunteers, falsely certifying that they belonged to his Battalion in order to allow them to compete for prizes in matches that were open to "Volunteers only," when such persons never belonged either to Lt.-Col. Lewis' Battalion or any other corps of Volunteers; the names of two of such persons being———*

Fifth.—That at the same match, by allowing such persons to appear as Volunteers he brought great discredit on the Battalion, as one of the parties was turned off the grounds for being improperly dressed, appearing in such a style that he was a laughing stock to all present, and caused very uncomplimentary remarks to be passed against the whole corps.

Sixth.—That at the quarterly meeting of the officers of the Battalion in July last, he was guilty of *deliberate falsehood*, in denying that he had made use of certain expressions regarding an officer of the Battalion with which that officer charged him, and which expressions he afterwards admitted he had used.

Seventh.—That about three weeks since he spoke in a manner disrespectful of his superior officer, by stating in the presence of several officers of the Battalion that Lt.-Col. Taylor (referring to the Deputy A. General of Militia) had acted in the matter of the recent difficulties in the Battalion anything but the part of a gentleman.

Eighth.—That he has been guilty of falsehood and dishonesty in matters connected with the economy of the Battalion, and of uniform discourtesy to his officers, and that his conduct generally has been unbecoming that of an officer and a gentleman.

And I request that a court of enquiry may be convened for the purpose of investigating the foregoing charges.

I have the honor to be, Sir,
Your most obedient servant,

C. BENNETT,
Lieut. 7th Batt.

To Lt.-Col. Robt. Lewis, Commanding 7th Batt., V. M.

Mr. Bennett, on 25th Oct., wrote to the Minister of Militia, asking if any action was to be taken on these charges, and received the following reply:

DEPARTMENT OF MILITIA AND DEFENCE,
OTTAWA, November 15th, 1869.

SIR,—

In reply to your letter of the 25th ult., I am directed by the Honorable the Minister of Militia and Defence, to inform you that after due enquiry he has learned that the Adjutant General of Militia, just before his inspection of the 7th Battalion in September last, was notified that you and several other officers of the 7th Battalion had become disaffected towards your commanding officer (Lt.-Col. Lewis), and were conducting yourselves in a manner subver-

* These names are omitted from this copy, as the parties are in no way connected with this controversy

sive of good order and inconsistent with the principles of militia discipline, and that you had tendered your resignation on the ground that you would not serve under Lt -Col. Lewis; also, that after a due investigation was discovered that some of the officers concerned did not wish to ı ve the Regiment; that with the view of restoring harmony and good feeling among the officers, the Adjutant General had an interview with them, but failed to discover that in sending in your resignation you had any military or professional ground of grievance against Lt.-Col. Lewis; that an appeal was then made in the kindest manner to your feelings as an officer and a gentleman, and that Lt.-Col. Lewis frankly and freely offered to apologise, if he had been so unfortunate as to hurt your feelings, but without effect; that you appear to have been treated with the greatest leniency and consideration; and ample time was given for you to reflect upon the course you were pursuing; that it was not deemed necessary to take any notice of the complaints and accusations, afterwards made by you, and still less to recommend a compliance with your request; that the Deputy Adjutant General in command of your District informed you that your resignation would be accepted if you were not disposed to return to duty in a proper spirit, and to apologise to your commanding officer; and that as you did not think proper to adopt that course your resignation was duly submitted to and accepted at Head Quarters, and you were gazetted out of the Active Militia, on the 11th October last.

I am to add that under all the circumstances the course adopted by the Adjutant General has been fully concurred in by the Minister of Militia and Defence, who does not deem it necessary that any further proceedings should be taken in the matter.

I have the honor to be, Sir,

Your most obedient servant,

GEORGE FUTVOYE,

Dy. of M. of M. & D.

C. Bennett, Esq.

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